

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 AF-10 ARA-14 EUR-12 NEA-10  
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R 230802Z AUG 78  
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4110  
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 3 CANBERRA 6701

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: UNSC, PORG, SF, WA, AS  
SUBJ: STATEMENT BY FOREIGN MINISTER PEACOCK ON AN AUSTRALIAN  
CONTRIBUTION TO UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN NAMIBIA

1. FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF FOREIGN MINISTER ANTHONY PEACOCK'S  
STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AUSTRALIA CONTRIB-  
UTING TO A UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN NAMIBIA.

2. BEGIN TEXT. MR. SPEAKER, I WISH TO MAKE A STATEMENT TO INFORM  
THE HOUSE OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING NAMIBIA. HONORABLE  
MEMBERS WILL BE AWARE OF PRESS REPORTS THAT AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN  
ASKED TO PROVIDE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROPOSED UNITED NATIONS  
PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN NAMIBIA. THE PRECISE SIZE AND STRUCTURE  
OF THE PEACEKEEPING FORCE - TO BE KNOWN AS THE UNITED NATIONS  
TRANSITION ASSISTANCE GROUP (UNTAG) - HAS YET TO BE DECIDED BY  
THE UNITED NATIONS. HOWEVER, INFORMAL SOUNDINGS HAVE BEEN MADE  
AS TO WHETHER AUSTRALIA MIGHT BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE FORCE.  
SIMILAR APPROACHES HAVE ALSO BEEN MADE TO OTHER COUNTRIES. I  
WOULD LIKE TO MAKE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT SO FAR NO FORMAL APPROACH  
HAS BEEN MADE TO AUSTRALIA. NOR, CONTRARY TO SOME PRESS REPORTS,  
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HAS AUSTRALIA MADE ANY OFFER OF A CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED  
NATIONS.

I AM NOT SEEKING TODAY TO MAKE A DEFINITIVE STATEMENT ON ALL THE  
ISSUES INVOLVED IN THIS IMPORTANT QUESTION. MY STATEMENT TODAY  
SHOULD BE SEEN AS A PREAMBLE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S DETAILED CONSID-  
ERATION OF IT. I SEE IT AS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE PARLIAMENT

AND THE PUBLIC HAVE THE FULLEST POSSIBLE COMPREHENSION OF THIS MATTER AND IT IS WITH THIS IN MIND THAT I NOW WISH TO EXAMINE THE CONSIDERATIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CASE.

IT IS UNLIKELY THAT AUSTRALIA WILL BE ASKED TO PROVIDE COMBATANT FORCES, BUT WE COULD BE ASKED TO SUPPLY MILITARY PERSONNEL AS PART OF AN INTEGRATED LOGISTICS ELEMENT INVOLVING A TRANSPORT AND SUPPLY UNIT, A COMMUNICATIONS UNIT, AND SOME ANCILLARY STAFF WHICH WOULD HELP BACK-UP THE MAIN U.N. CONTINGENT. THESE ITEMS HAVE BEEN MENTIONED TO US AS POSSIBLY COMING FROM AUSTRALIA. BUT I WOULD STRESS AGAIN THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO FORMAL REQUEST. AS IS NORMALLY THE CASE WITH UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS, A FORCE FOR NAMIBIA WOULD BE SET UP PURSUANT TO A RESOLUTION OF THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL, WHICH WOULD PROVIDE IT WITH A SPECIFIC MANDATE SPELLING OUT ITS ROLE AND CHARTER OF OPERATIONS. THE FORCE WOULD BE UNDER A COMMANDER APPOINTED BY AND RESPONSIBLE TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL.

IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL WILL MEET TOWARDS THE END OF THIS MONTH OR THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER TO CONSIDER A REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE PROPOSED OPERATION OF THE FORCE AND TO DECIDE ON ITS ESTABLISHMENT. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT WILL BE HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY THE FINDINGS OF HIS SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE, MR. AHTISAARI OF FINLAND, WHO IS CURRENTLY IN NAMIBIA TO ASSESS THE POLITICAL SITUATION ON THE GROUND AND THE PROSPECTS FOR AN ORDERLY TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE.

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AS PART OF HIS INVESTIGATION MR. AHTISARRI WILL INVESTIGATE IN DETAIL ASPECTS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT AND PRACTICAL OPERATIONS OF THE PROPOSED PEACEKEEPING FORCE. IT WILL NOT BE UNTIL THIS INVESTIGATION IS CONCLUDED AND ITS RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE SECURITY COUNCIL THAT MORE WILL BE KNOWN OF THE TASKS THE FORCE WILL HAVE TO PERFORM, THE EXTENT AND TYPE OF UNITS LIKELY TO BE REQUIRED, THE COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS AND THE DIFFICULTIES LIKELY TO BE MET IN CARRYING OUT THE U.N. MANDATE.

BY WAY OF BACKGROUND I SHOULD EXPLAIN THAT THE ADOPTION BY THE SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE PROPOSALS OF THE FIVE WESTERN MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN NAMIBIA REPRESENTS THE FIRST MAJOR SUCCESS FOR WESTERN DIPLOMACY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE HAS BEEN REACHED WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND THE MAJOR NAMIBIAN NATIONALIST GROUP, THE SOUTH WEST AFRICA PEOPLES ORGANIZATION (SWAPO), ON THE BROAD BASIS OF SETTLEMENT PROPOSALS FOR NAMIBIA, ALTHOUGH THERE REMAIN DIFFERENCES IN INTERPRETATION.

THIS FOLLOWS SOME 15 MONTHS OF PAINSTAKING NEGOTIATIONS. THE FUTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ENCLAVE OF WALVIS BAY, NOT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSED IN THE PROPOSALS, REMAINS AN IMPORTANT OBSTACLE TO AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT.

IN THE PROPOSALS OF THE "FIVE", THE CENTRAL TASK OF THE U.N. FORCE WOULD BE TO ENSURE THAT CONDITIONS ARE ESTABLISHED TO ALLOW AN IMPARTIAL ELECTORAL PROCESS LEADING TO FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS AND INDEPENDENCE. DURING THE INTERIM PERIOD BOTH SOUTH AFRICA AND SWAPO FORCES WILL BE REQUIRED PROGRESSIVELY TO WITHDRAW TO CAMPS UNDER U.N. SUPERVISION. THE EXISTING SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE WILL RETAIN PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTAINING LAW AND ORDER IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARRANGEMENTS TO BE AGREED WITH AND SUPERVISED

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BY THE U.N. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE. THE U.N. FORCE WILL BE REQUIRED TO ASSIST THE POLICE IN THIS ROLE AND TO "GUARANTEE AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF INTIMIDATION AND INTERFERENCE WITH THE ELECTORAL PROCESS FROM WHATEVER QUARTER." THE U.N. FORCE WOULD ALSO ASSUME THE TASK OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY FORCES IN MAINTAINING BORDER SURVEILLANCE TO PREVENT INFILTRATION. A CIVILIAN COMPONENT OF UNTAG IS EXPECTED TO ASSIST WITH THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ELECTIONS. UNDER THE AGREED PROPOSALS A CEASEFIRE IS TO BE IN EFFECT PRIOR TO THE ARRIVAL OF THE PEACE-KEEPING FORCE. IT IS NOT INTENDED THAT THE U.N. WOULD BE EXPECTED TO IMPOSE A CEASEFIRE OR A SETTLEMENT BUT ITS POSITION COULD BE DIFFICULT IF THE CEASEFIRE INITIALLY ESTABLISHED WERE TO BREAK DOWN AFTER ITS ARRIVAL.

OVER THE YEARS, THE UNITED NATIONS WORK IN INTERNATIONAL PEACE-KEEPING HAS BECOME ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN AND MOST SUCCESSFUL OF ITS ACTIVITIES. THERE ARE AT PRESENT UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCES OPERATING IN THREE REGIONS: THE MIDDLE EAST, CYPRUS AND

KASHMIR, AND AUSTRALIANS ARE INVOLVED IN ALL THREE. THERE IS  
THUS ALREADY A SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION BY AUSTRALIA TO UNITED  
NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS. THIS HAS DEMONSTRATED OUR  
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CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE UNITED  
NATIONS CHARTER; MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL  
PEACE AND SECURITY. SUCCESSIVE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN  
FIRMLY COMMITTED TO THESE AIRMS.

NAMIBIA IS A COUNTRY ABOUT THE SIZE OF N.S.W. AND WITH A POPULATION  
OF JUST UNDER ONE MILLION PEOPLE. IT IS RICH IN MINERALS, INCLUD-  
ING URANIUM. IT WAS FOR MANY YEARS ADMINISTERED BY SOUTH AFRICA  
UNDER A MANDATE GRANTED BY THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, WHICH WAS  
CHANGED TO A TRUSTEESHIP WHEN THE UNITED NATIONS SUPERCEDED THE  
LEAGUE. SOUTH AFRICA, HOWEVER, REFUSED TO CONTINUE THE TRUSTEE-  
SHIP MANDATE, CLAIMING THAT THE TERRITORY HAD BEEN FULLY INTER-  
GRATED WITH SOUTH AFRICA. IN 1966 THE UNITED NATIONS RESOLVED  
THAT SOUTH AFRICA'S CONTINUING ADMINISTRATION WAS ILLEGAL, A  
DECISION UPHELD BY THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE. IN RECENT  
YEARS A CONTINUOUS BUT LOW LEVEL GUERRILLA CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN  
CARRIED ON BY THE NAMIBIAN NATIONALISTS, LED BY SWAPO, AGAINST THE  
MILITARY FORCES OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ADMINISTRATION, NUMBERING  
SOME 13,000, AND THE SUPPORTERS OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE TERRITORY.  
THIS CAMPAIGN HAS INVOLVED SPORADIC ACTS OF TERRORISM, MINOR  
SABOTAGE AND SOME BORDER INCIDENTS. THE LEVEL OF GUERRILLA  
ACTIVITY HAS BEEN ON A VERY MUCH LOWER SCALE THAN IS CURRENTLY  
THE CASE IN RHODESIA.

IN THE LIGHT OF THIS DEVELOPING CONFLICT, THE FIVE WESTERN MEMBERS  
OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL LAST YEAR INSTITUTED TALKS WITH ALL INTER-  
ESTED PARTIES, INCLUDING SOUTH AFRICA AND SWAPO. THESE TALKS WERE  
AIMED AT ACHIEVING AN EARLY AND PEACEFUL TRANSITION FROM COLONIAL  
STATUS TO MAJORITY RULE AND INDEPENDENCE, THROUGH FREE ELECTIONS  
UNDER U.N. SUPERVISION.

WE IN AUSTRALIA HAVE NOT BEEN USED TO THINKING OF AFRICA AS AN  
AREA OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO US. THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF AUSTRALIAN  
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DEFENCE PLANNING IS - OF NECESSITY - AUSTRALIA'S OWN REGION,  
ALTHOUGH WE HAVE WIDER STRATEGIC INTERESTS ELSEWHERE. THE QUESTION  
THEREFORE ARISES WHETHER NAMIBIA IS AN APPROPRIATE PLACE FOR  
AUSTRALIA TO CONTEMPLATE A SIGNIFICANT MILITARY INVOLVEMENT.  
ON THE OTHER HAND, IN AN INCREASINGLY INTERDEPENDENT WORLD THE  
PROBLEMS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA ARE IMPORTANT AND WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY

SUPPORTED THE NEED TO FIND PEACEFUL AND NEGOTIATED SOLUTIONS TO THEM. BASIC QUESTIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND MAJORITY RULE ARE INVOLVED. CONTINUING INSTABILITY, CREATES THE VERY CONDITIONS IN WHICH EXTREMIST INFLUENCES CAN THRIVE. THE ONLY BENEFICIARY OF SUCH INSTABILITY CAN BE FORCES HOSTILE TO THE WEST. IT IS NOT THE WEST'S INTERESTS FOR THERE TO BE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN NAMIBIA, THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH WOULD EXTEND FAR BEYOND NAMIBIA'S BORDERS. IT WOULD NOT OF ITSELF RESOLVE THE OTHER PROBLEMS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA BUT IT WOULD HELP TO ARREST THE GROWING TREND TOWARDS MILITARY SOLUTIONS.

IN NAMIBIA, THROUGH AN INITIATIVE INSPIRED AND CARRIED THROUGH BY THE WESTERN POWERS, AND SUBSTANTIALLY ASSISTED BY THE PRESIDENTS OF THE SO-CALLED FRONT LINE STATES (ANGOLA, SAMBIA, TANZANIA, MOZAMBIQUE AND BOTSWANA) THE SITUATION HAS REACHED THE STATE WHERE THERE IS NOW A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO REACH A SATISFACTORY AND INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE AND MAJORITY RULE. IT COULD WELL BE THAT AS A RESULT OF ELECTIONS UNDER U.N. AUSPICES, SWAPO GAINS POWER IN NAMIBIA. SWAPO, AS I HAVE ALREADY NOTED, IS THE MAJOR NAMIBIAN NATIONALIST GROUP. IT ESPOUSES A SOCIALIST PHILOSOPHY AND MUCH OF ITS RHETORIC IS BASED ON MARXISMS. BUT ITS PROGRAM CALLS FOR A WESTERN-STYLE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM, GUARANTEES OF CIVIL LIBERTY AND AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH. IT HAS A MAXIMUM OF SOME 4,000 GUERRILLAS AT ALL STATES OF TRAINING AND PROFICIENCY, OF WHOM SOME 200 ARE BASED IN NAMIBIA, WITH THE REMAINDER ACROSS THE BORDER IN ANGOLA AND ZAMBIA. SWAPO, LIKE MOST SIMILAR NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS, IS DIVIDED. THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ITS INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL WINGS AND BETWEEN MODERATES AND THOSE WHO TAKE A HARDER LINE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IF SWAPO WERE TO SPLIT ON IDEOLOGICAL GROUNDS OR, IF IT SEEMED

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LIKELY THAT IT MIGHT NOT WIN THE ELECTIONS, THERE COULD BE AN UPSURGE IN GUERRILLA ACTIVITY.

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THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE PROPOSED U.N. OPERATION WILL BE AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND DELICATE ONE. THE WESTERN PROPOSALS CONTAIN A NUMBER OF AMBIGUITIES AND IMPRECISSIONS, WHICH COULD BECOME THE SUBJECT OF CONTENTION BETWEEN THE PARTIES THEMSELVES OR ONE OR OTHER OF THEM AND THE U.N. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE. THE PHYSICAL DIFFICULTIES ATTENDANT UPON THE INTRODUCTION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE U.N. FORCE WILL BE CONSIDERABLE. EVEN WHEN THE FORCE IS IN PLACE WHERE WILL REMAIN THE RISK OF A BREAKDOWN OF THE AGREEMENT AND OF DISORDER AND VIOLENCE. HOWEVER, THE SITUATION THE U.N. FORCES WOULD FACE IN NAMIBIA IS ONE WHERE IT WOULD BE IN THE INTERESTS OF ALL THE PARTIES THAT THE SETTLEMENT SUCCEED AND DISORDER BE AVOIDED. NEVERTHELESS, THE POSSIBILITY OF ATTACKS ON AND CASUALTIES FOR A U.N. FORCE IN SUCH A HIGHLY CHARGED POLITICAL SITUATION CANNOT BE RULED OUT. AN AUSTRALIAN LOGISTIC FORCE COULD BE VULNERABLE TO SUCH ATTACKS.

THERE IS ALSO A POTENTIAL FOR DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITHIN THE MIXED U.N. FORCE IN THE HIGHLY VOLATILE UNCLASSIFIED

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POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IT WILL BE PLACED. THESE COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT ITS OPERATION, ESPECIALLY IN ANY COMBAT SITUATION, AND HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR ITS SECURITY. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE'S VISIT TO NAMIBIA WILL NO DOUBT SHED ADDITIONAL LIGHT ON THESE MATTERS AND ASSIST US TOWARDS JUDGEMENTS ON THE SORT OF ROLE, IF ANY, AUSTRALIA MIGHT BE ABLE TO PLAY.

THE EFFECT OF AN AUSTRALIAN CONTRIBUTION WOULD ALSO NEED TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF OUR OWN DEFENCE CAPABILITIES AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS IF OUR LIMITED MILITARY RESOURCES WERE TO BE DEPLETED BY A DECISION TO CONTRIBUTE A KEY IF LIMITED ELEMENT TO A FORCE IN NAMIBIA.

THE WHOLE QUESTION OF CONTRIBUTING TO A PEACEKEEPING FORCE FOR NAMIBIA WILL REQUIRE THE CLOSEST EXAMINATION BY THE GOVERNMENT. WE SHALL HAVE TO CONSIDER THE VALUE OF AN AUSTRALIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS' EFFORT, AND HOW OUR OWN NATIONAL AND FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS WOULD BE SERVED THEREBY.

THERE COULD BE SUBSTANTIAL COSTS, AT A TIME WHEN OUR FISCAL POLICIES REQUIRE TIGHT BUDGETARY RESTRAINT ON DEFENCE AS WELL AS OTHER AREAS OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE. THERE IS ALSO THE BASIC QUESTION OF WHETHER, HAVING REGARD TO THE FACT THAT AUSTRALIA IS ALREADY CONTRIBUTING TO UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCES IN THREE OTHER AREAS, AUSTRALIA SHOULD WISH OR FEEL OBLIGED TO CONTRIBUTE IN NAMIBIA AS WELL. IN CONSIDERING THESE QUESTIONS, THE GOVERNMENT WILL OF COURSE BE IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS. UNTIL FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE, DETAILED CON-

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SIDERATION OF ALL THE RELEVANT ISSUES IS NOT POSSIBLE. FOR EXAMPLE BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT COULD MAKE A DECISION IT WOULD REQUIRE FURTHER INFORMATION ON SUCH MATTERS AS WHAT OTHER COUNTRIES ARE LIKELY TO CONTRIBUTE WHAT WILL BE THE SIZE AND CAPABILITIES OF THEIR CONTINGENTS AND WHAT WOULD BE THE LIKELY DANGERS TO THE FORCE SHOULD ONE OF THE PARTIES REPUDIATE THE AGREEMENT WHICH INCLUDES A CEASE FIRE. SWAPO HAS SAID THAT IT WILL NOT OBSERVE A CEASE FIRE UNTIL SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS ARE CONFINED TO BASE. SOUTH AFRICA MAINTAINS THAT IT WILL NOT CONFINE ITS TROOPS TO BASE UNTIL A CEASE FIRE IS IN OPERATION. SOME ELEMENTS WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT ARE NOT RECONCILED TO THE SETTLEMENT PROPOSALS.

AS WELL WE WOULD NEED TO BE ASSURED THAT AN AUSTRALIAN CONTRIBUTION WOULD NOT BE OPEN-ENDED, AND THAT THE TASK GIVEN TO THE AUSTRALIAN CONTINGENT WOULD BE WITHIN ITS CAPABILITIES. SHOULD THERE BE DELAY IN THE ELECTORAL PROGRAM OR A DETERIORATION IN THE GENERAL SECURITY SITUATION, THE U.N. FORCE MAY WELL BE REQUIRED TO STAY ON. WHILE IT IS ALWAYS THEORETICALLY OPEN TO A COUNTRY TO WITHDRAW FROM A U.N. FORCE, IT IS IN PRACTICE VERY DIFFICULT TO DO SO. THIS COULD RAISE VERY SERIOUS PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES FOR US. WE SHALL NEED TO EXAMINE CAREFULLY WHAT OTHER POSSIBLE OPTIONS ARE OPEN TO US.

FOR ALL THESE REASONS, THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT IN A POSITION TO RESPOND TO THE INFORMAL U.N. SOUNDINGS AT THIS STAGE. THE GOVERNMENT WILL, HOWEVER, KEEP THE

MATTER UNDER THE CLOSEST REVIEW IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO  
MAKE AN EARLY DECISION SHOULD A DEFINITE REQUEST BE  
RECEIVED FORM THE UNITED NATIONS. I SHALL KEEP THE HOUSE  
INFORMED. END TEXT.  
ALSTON

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## Message Attributes

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